

Psm. 11:3

Baptists For Liberty

Prov. 29:2

*"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,
and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Gal. 5:1*

NEWS LETTER

Issue #10

July 2013

Monthly Verse: *"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins,
and that ye receive not of her plagues." Revelation 18:4*

"Deceived"

by Bro. Todd Bryant



"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" – Matthew 7:22-23

This will be a shocking response to those today that feel like they are earning their salvation by their works. Notice, these are not claiming the blood of Jesus for their justification. Their confidence for eternal life is in their works. Without doubt, many working today under the guise of Christianity will hear these very words. As harsh as that sounds, the Bible is clear.

Just a few decades after Christ's ministry, false doctrines began to ease their way into churches. Paul wrote to the saints in Galatia about those that had taught another gospel. He said, *"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel"* (Galatians 1:6). Speaking of these false witnesses, Paul instructed the Galatian saints, *"if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed"* (Galatians 1:9). This may sound unsympathetic to some. However, we must realize that eternal life is in question here. When we share the Way of salvation to people, we must share the truth of the Gospel in Christ alone.

Are we so naïve as to believe that much of what is being done today in the name of Christianity falls into this category? Did not Paul tell Timothy, *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables"* (2 Timothy 4:3)? I hear many today who believe we are in the last days (and we are). However, some of these don't realize that this passage necessarily applies. As difficult as it may be for us to accept it, not everybody who has a church sign in front of their building is doing God's work. There may very well be some true believers there. But, their doctrine is bad. Knowing this, how are we to respond? First of all, we need to make sure the place we attend is preaching the Bible as God's Word. Surely, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16).

Pastors need to get out of this "self help" business and get back to preaching God's Word. Secondly, we need to test our own selves to make sure we are trusting in Christ alone. Peter tells us, *"...be even more diligent to make your call and election sure"* (2 Peter 1:10).

Child of God, we live in a wicked age. Many heretical doctrines are being taught and have misled many. Multitudes are trusting in something other than Christ as their way to Heaven. Rest assured, salvation is in Christ alone!

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Sermon: "An Old Testament Warning for The New Testament Church"
by Bro. David M. Green



"Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth. Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah." (Deuteronomy 6:1-16)

As we read through the Old Testament we are tempted to think of ourselves as being so much better than Israel. We think that somehow we would never do the things they did. Yet, when we are honest with ourselves and really consider our ways, we realize that they are not so much different than we are. They murmured often in their journeys. We too murmur in our journeys. They often disobeyed. We often disobey. They went after the gods of the people around them. We are prone to follow the gods of the people around us.

"I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." (Psalm 138:2)

In the world, there are five standards that men will consult: tradition, their own personal opinion, public consensus, religious literature, or the Word of God. If you consider anything besides the Bible, then you are rejecting God's Word as your ultimate standard. And since God has placed His Word above His name, then this would be going after another god. Let us consider for a moment each of these:

FALSE GOD 1: TRADITION

"Sola Scriptura!" was the cry of the Reformation, but there were traditions which were not based on any Scripture whatsoever that were held by them. For one, all the Reformers including Martin Luther and John Calvin believed Roman Catholicism to be the "true church." Totally ignoring Matthew 16:18 and a host of other Scriptures they sought out to reform Roman Catholicism. They, and their followers held on to Catholic baptism of infants even though this was not based on even one Scripture.

"He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." (Mark 7:6-9)

Holding tradition as the standard stinks in the nostrils of Almighty God!

"Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" (Matthew 15:1-3).

FALSE GOD 2: OPINION

Everyone has an opinion ("a view, judgment, or appraisal formed in the mind about a particular matter") and sometimes we must rely on opinions. For instance, it is my opinion that blue pens underline better than black pens. Maybe you disagree with me, but there is no Scripture either of us can cite to make our opinion any stronger. So, you can underline in black and I will underline in blue. We are at liberty in such things.

"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." (1Kings 18:21)

Where opinion is wrong is when there is Scripture that contradicts opinion and we stick with opinion. Many so-called churches and cults around us have founded their doctrine on opinion instead of the Word of God. Let us beware that we "... not go after other gods, of the gods of the people..." who are round about us.

FALSE GOD 3: CONSENSUS

Consensus ("general agreement") is a lot like opinion, but it involves a lot more people. Some folks will get a few others and see what their opinions are. So, in the above example, I just said blue pens underline better than black ones. You think that is absolutely absurd. So, you talk to the others in the church, and get on the phone with your friends and come back next week to tell me that the consensus is that black pens are better. Still, there is not a bit of Scripture you could use on this so I can still go on using blue pens. I might be considered strange or unusual but that has never bothered me before. I am still at liberty to use blue pens, and you are at liberty to go with the majority and use black pens.

Sometimes we rely on consensus and it is ok to do so. Where consensus is wrong is when it is contradictory with Scripture. Indeed sometimes a consensus view is wrong, and we are warned against it.

"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil...." (Exodus 23:2)

Sometimes the multitude will lead you wrong. Time and time again, consensus turns out to be a bad thing. Indeed the saying that there is

safety in numbers is not always true. For instance, ten out of the twelve spies told Israel they could not take the land (Numbers 13 and 14). The consensus at the church of Corinth was to do nothing about the fornicator in their midst (I Corinthians 5) and also to abuse the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11). The consensus of the church in Thyatira was to allow Jezebel to teach and seduce (Revelation 2:20).

Many so-called churches and cults around us have founded their doctrine on consensus instead of the Word of God. Let us beware that we "... not go after other gods, of the gods of the people..." who are round about us.

FALSE GOD 4: RELIGIOUS WRITINGS

Oh, the multitudes of books that have been written on the subject of religion! There is not a room big enough to contain all the multitudes of books. They have their place, but far too often they are simply collections of opinions and consensus views on their subjects. We can find them to be of some value, but must be careful lest we put our favorite religious writing or author to a higher plane than the Scripture.

"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" (1 Corinthians 3:3-5)

You might hear of one Baptist who will not believe something unless Spurgeon said it, while another quotes Matthew Henry exclusively. And then another uses John Gill as the standard. Yet these writers were men and only men. A commentary or any religious book can lead you in the wrong direction.

I have also found that these great writers of religious topics can change. For instance, A.W. Pink changed his position on eschatology. At one point he was premill and later he was amill.

Paul used other books in his sermons. For instance on Mars Hill he quoted from some Greek literature (see Acts 17:28), but notice he did not base his doctrine on that source! The other day I heard some fellow on the radio who was supposed to be preaching, but after 20 minutes the only thing he had referenced was writings by Martin Luther. I turned him off because I did not want to hear about what Martin Luther wrote – I wanted to know what the Lord said!

Many so-called churches and cults around us have founded their doctrine on religious writings, confessions, and creeds instead of the Word of God. Let us beware that we "... not go after other gods, of the gods of the people..." who are round about us.

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

"I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." (Psalm 138:2)

The Bible is God's Word. Only it has never changed. The Bible is the only one in which you can rest assured it will not lead you wrong. The Bible is the only standard that we need. All opinions, consensus, religious writings must bow down to the authority of the Scripture for it is the truth!

Only the Bible is God's inspired, infallible Word:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Jesus appealed to the Bible as the truth:

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17)

Jesus commanded us to search the Scriptures:

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39)

The early churches used Scripture as their standard:

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." (Acts 17:11)

We have been told to preach from God's Word:

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (2 Timothy 4:2)

CONCLUSION

Sometimes, all five of these may agree and in a perfect world that is how it would always be. But we do not live in a perfect world. And often these four are in total disagreement. In such instances if we choose an option other than the Bible, we are rejecting God and His Word. We are instead following the gods of the people which are round about us.

When any people discard God's Word as embracing all necessary laws for the individual Christian or the whole church, that people has launched upon a limitless ocean. Any erroneous law, (and any law added to the Bible is erroneous) will inevitably and soon demand another, and others will demand yet others, without ever an end. Christ gave His churches and to preachers absolutely no legislative powers. Let us avoid the gods of the people around us and remember what God says in Revelation 22:18-19: *"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."*

Editorial:
"Books On The Shelf"
by Sis. Joanna Works



"The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." - Ecclesiastes 12:11-13

Being a PK (Preacher's Kid) I grew up in houses full of books, where ever we moved dad's books came with, and so did mom's home schooling books. Many of these books topics overlapped in warning of attacks on the family, Christianity and preparing for the worst. It amazes me now as I read the covers of these books and glance through them that they were almost all published in the 70's & 80's, many before I was born.

I had read some of these books when I was in elementary and Jr. High, such as John Whitehead's "Stealing of America" and "Babylon Mystery

Religion” by Ralph Woodrow. The Chick comic book series about a former Catholic Priest & Jesuit named Alberto was particularly rememberable. You could say the theme of this issue was mostly inspired by the influence of these books. When I had first started this newsletter I had intended on re-reading some of these to write book reviews but hadn’t gotten to it just yet though this month I have put a dent into it and hope to have two reviews posted on our website before our next issue. (In the meantime Sis. Regina Duncan who is our regular book reviewer has a review on a newer publication up on our website <http://baptistsforliberty.weebly.com/2/post/2013/07/unity-in-the-mystical-body-of-christ.html>)

At any rate I have a few thoughts I’d like to share on the topic of books:

1. The books you have in your home can have an impact, even if you don’t read them.

Even though I read some heavy topic books at a young age I am a very slow reader, but I knew what the books in my dad’s office where about, I had a concept of their content & message even though I didn’t fully comprehend them. Now that I’m older and make regular raids in his office to carry off handfuls of books at a time to give them temporary dwelling on the shelves & desk in my room, it amazes me as I read these to consider how much of the information on history & politics I had once known and forgotten these books contain.

2. The warnings of coming destruction is no less true today than they were when these books where published.

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” – II Peter 3:3 & 4

God has given us His Word, which of course is the most important book, and in it He tells of His coming Judgment as well as His plan of redemption for His elect. Jesus has finished the work of redemption, and He will come back to fulfill all of His promises & prophecies.

There is much more rambling thoughts I had planned on including in this piece, but I have run out of time to collect them and write them down. I hope this has provided some food for thought and the LORD will use the other articles and the sermons to bless you, so in closing I’ll just remind you that as much as we may or may not enjoy reading, *“And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”* Ecclesiastes 12:12 however *“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.”* - Proverbs 30:5

The Forum: “Evangelicals”?

Question: A very popular term used in secular news media and among American Christendom, especially in regards to politics, is "Evangelical". While we are Missionary Baptists, "evangelical" seems to denote many concepts of what the world thinks Christians are or are not, and may even have the connotation of being part of the ecumenical movement, and so the question is should Baptists consider themselves evangelicals? Why or why not?

Bro. Todd Bryant, Northport, Alabama: I'm not a fan of terms for various reasons. This question just shows why. The easy answer is "yes" -

Baptists are evangelicals. In fact, our type of churches are the original evangelicals that you see in the book of Acts. Every other type of evangelism you see is an offshoot (and oftentimes perversion) of original evangelism. So, in that sense, we certainly are evangelic.

Sadly, many, if not most, of our churches today know little of being evangelistic. Most support a few other works..maybe..but do little to nothing in their own community. Simply, this is improper and out of order completely. In that sense, these cannot be said to be missionary (or evangelical) even if their sign denotes otherwise.

Terms can cause confusion. Even terms we all like such as "Sovereign Grace" oftentimes confuse. Many equate "Sovereign Grace" with the Primitive Baptists because it's a term they use often. Does this mean we should scrap the term? No...it's a good term. But, with any term, there will be confusion.

We'd be best to keep it all Biblical. If people misunderstand, we'll try to explain as best we can...in love and concern, of course.

If we are not evangelistic, we need to be. We'd be better off not misrepresenting the truth. To declare ones self to be evangelistic when he/she has never shared the Gospel as much as one time is simply deceiving ourselves.

Rather than concerning ourselves with semantics, let us just be about the Lord's business. That will hold much better at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Bro. Curtis Pugh Poteau, Oklahoma: This is one of those “yes and no” questions! When used to designate individuals or congregations that believe in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ – and by that we mean His finished work on behalf of sinners – we answer a resounding “Yes!” On the other hand, most people who claim to be “evangelicals” today take the Arminian view to one degree or another. They claim to believe in salvation by grace, but attempt to mix works of one sort or another into grace. Charles Spurgeon spoke of these kind of “evangelicals” by saying, “The doctrine of justification itself, as preached by an Arminian, is nothing but the doctrine of salvation by works...” This writer thinks Spurgeon was correct in his assessment of them.

Today, most “evangelicals” preach an atonement that does not really and actually atone. To hear them tell it, Christ died equally for all men, but His death does not really accomplish the salvation of anyone. They preach that unless and until the spiritually dead sinner initiates his own salvation by exercising faith, praying the sinner's prayer, opening his heart's door to Jesus, making a decision or some other such thing, the death of Christ is powerless to save him. Essentially they preach that Christ made salvation possible to all men, but it is their own action or effort or works that actually saves them. Christ's work is viewed by them as insufficient. To be saved the sinner must add to what Christ did. Thus, as Spurgeon said, what they preach “is nothing but the doctrine of salvation by works.”

So the question is this: do sound Baptists want to be identified with the multitude of Arminian individuals, Arminian religious organizations and Arminian congregations that proclaim themselves “evangelicals” Perhaps we sovereign grace Baptists would be best off to just consider ourselves followers of the Lamb and members of New Testament Baptist congregations. That name Baptist is an apt description, at least historically, of our beliefs and practices and was given us in derision and for spiteful reasons because of our strict stand on baptism. Personally, I never think of myself as an “evangelical” and have no association with those organizations that identify themselves as such except that I have

friends and relatives among them. In short, I see no need or benefit for Baptists to consider themselves evangelicals. And I think claiming to be an evangelical just muddies the water and gives an uncertain sound to our message and our identity.

News

Abortion: This month we saw a lot of fuss in the media about a Texas bill that would ban abortions after 20 weeks (that's 5 months, more than half way through a pregnancy.) The bill also included regulations to hold abortion clinics to higher medical standards. More than one commentator & anti-abortion group pointed out that the Pro-life movement has excepted the Pro-abortionist's mantra, "rare, safe & legal." One could also look to see that just last year the state of Oklahoma past a very similar bill which did very little to prevent abortions because most abortions are performed before 20 weeks.

Texas Planned Parenthood however did announce this month that they will be shutting down five of their clinics in the state, four of the closings are because of a previous bill in Texas cutting off state tax funds going to the organization, the fifth will be closed because of the medical standards in the bill past this month.

Mean while in Congress, Texas congressman Steve Stockman made this press release:

"Government has one responsibility and that is to protect the individual right to life and property. The right to life is the most basic and inalienable of all human rights and decades of scientific progress continue to prove life begins at conception," said Stockman. "Passage of a Sanctity of Life Act would be a landmark achievement for civil and human rights in the United States."

Stockman was the original sponsor of the first Sanctity of Life Act in 1995.

You can read Sanctity of Life Act 2013 by going to <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr2764>

This web page tracks the progression of this bill, according to the statistics listed on the page there is only 11% chance of it passing comity, which is a bill's first hurdle.

It's seven co-sponsors at this time are:

Bonner, Jo [R-AL1]

Duncan, Jeff [R-SC3]

Franks, Trent [R-AZ8]

Neugebauer, Randy [R-TX19]

Pearce, Stevan "Steve" [R-NM2]

Bridenstine, Jim [R-OK1]

Kingston, Jack [R-GA1]

If your Congressman isn't Steve Stockman or one of these seven co-sponsors be sure to contact your Congressman to become a co-sponsor.

You may look up congressional legislation by subject by going to this URL <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/#subjects>

"*The New American*" published this interesting article on North Carolina's newest "pro-life" bill: <http://thenewamerican.com/culture/faith-and-morals/item/16115-north-carolina-passes-multi-purpose-pro-life-bill>

Also on the abortion front, yet another member of the main stream media stated that a child isn't considered "alive" unless the parent determines that they are, or the child is three years old. This time this philosophy was

stated by Melissa Harris-Perry an MSNBC host, you can read more on this at http://www.naturalnews.com/041398_post-birth_abortion_infanticide_Melissa_Harris-Perry.html

America under surveillance: There is a lot that could be said under this title, we'll just share the press release by Congressman Raul Labrador that he sent out on July 26th that sums up the situation & arguments so far; "*Message to NSA: Congress is Watching You*" "This was an important week in Congress, as the House debated and then voted on an amendment to roll back the outrageous National Security Agency (NSA) program in which the government collects the details of virtually every phone call that every American makes. While the amendment failed narrowly, 217-205, the fact that it even came up for a vote over the objection of House Leadership is a sign that Congress is starting to feel the heat from the American people about the gradual erosion of our Constitutional rights. While supporters of the NSA program would like to think that Wednesday's vote is the end of the debate, it's actually just the beginning, and we have gained new momentum in the fight to restore our basic liberties.

The amendment we voted on was introduced by Rep. Justin Amash (R-MI) and Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) and it was attached to the defense appropriations bill, which funds our military and intelligence agencies. The amendment would have done three important things. First, it would have ended the mass surveillance of Americans by specifically stating that the federal government is not authorized under Section 215 of the Patriot Act to hold a pool of metadata on every phone call of every American. Second, it would have permitted the government to continue acquiring business records and other "tangible things" that are *actually* related to an authorized counterterrorism investigation. This would have forced the government to comply with the intent of Congress when it passed the Patriot Act. Third, the amendment would have imposed more robust judicial oversight of the NSA's surveillance. The FISA court would have been required to be involved every time the NSA searched the records of an American citizen, and the court itself would have been required to have a substantive, statutory standard to apply to make sure the NSA does not violate our civil liberties.

These common-sense reforms to the Patriot Act would have fulfilled the intent of the law and stopped the abuses of power that are being carried out in its name. As even Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) – one of the authors of the original Patriot Act – acknowledged, those who wrote the law in 2001 never intended for it to be used in the way it's being used today. As Rep. Sensenbrenner wrote in an [op-ed](#) this week, "This is how freedom is lost — bit by bit, one secret decision at a time, out of necessity or for some higher purpose that we later come to regret. Such abuses must be reined in, and no false trade-off between freedom and security should be allowed to be decided behind closed doors ever again."

I agree. As we've seen with the IRS scandal and other scandals that have been rocking Washington during the past few months, government powers must be limited because governments, by their very nature, have a habit of abusing their powers. The reason I voted against reauthorizing the Patriot Act three times was because of its potential for abuse. Now those abuses are apparent for all to see. This week, we got 205 House members (94 Republicans and 111 Democrats) to buck a parade of Obama administration officials, former Bush administration officials, and Congressional leaders in both parties to stand strong for our Constitutional freedoms. Next time, we'll get a majority. The fight has just begun."

"The New World Order?"

by Bro. Donnie Burford



Question: "Does the Bible prophesy a one-world government and a one-world currency in the end times?"

Answer: The Bible does not use the phrase "one-world government" or "one-world currency" in referring to the end times. It does, however, provide ample evidence to enable us to draw the conclusion that both will exist under the rule of the Antichrist in the last days.

In his apocalyptic vision in the Book of Revelation, the Apostle John sees the "beast," also called the Antichrist, rising out of the sea having seven heads and ten horns (Revelation 13:1). Combining this vision with Daniel's similar one (Daniel 7:16-24), we can conclude that some sort of world system will be inaugurated by the beast, the most powerful "horn," who will defeat the other nine and will begin to wage war against Christians. The ten-nation confederacy is also seen in Daniel's image of the statue in Daniel 2:41-42, where he pictures the final world government consisting of ten entities represented by the ten toes of the statue. Whoever the ten are and however they come to power, Scripture is clear that the beast will either destroy them or reduce their power to nothing more than figureheads. In the end, they will do his bidding.

John goes on to describe the ruler of this vast empire as having power and great authority, given to him by Satan himself (Revelation 13:2), being followed by and receiving worship from "all the world" (13:3-4), and having authority over "every tribe, people, language and nation" (13:7). From this description, it is logical to assume that this person is the leader of a one-world government which is recognized as sovereign over all other governments. It's hard to imagine how such diverse systems of government as are in power today would willingly subjugate themselves to a single ruler, and there are many theories on the subject. A logical conclusion is that the disasters and plagues described in Revelation as the seal and trumpet judgments (chapters 6-11) will be so devastating and create such a monumental global crisis that people will embrace anything and anyone who promises to give them relief.

Once entrenched in power, the beast (Antichrist) and the power behind him (Satan) will move to establish absolute control over all peoples of the earth to accomplish their true end, the worship Satan has been seeking ever since being thrown out of heaven (Isaiah 14:12-14). One way they will accomplish this is by controlling all commerce, and this is where the idea of a one-world currency comes in. Revelation 13:16-17 describes some sort of satanic mark which will be required in order to buy and sell. This means anyone who refuses the mark will be unable to buy food, clothing or other necessities of life. No doubt the vast majority of people in the world will succumb to the mark simply to survive. Again, verse 16 makes it clear that this will be a universal system of control where everyone, rich and poor, great and small, will bear the mark on their hand or forehead. There is a great deal of speculation as to how exactly this mark will be affixed, but the technologies that are available right now could accomplish it very easily.

Those who are left behind after the Rapture of the Saints will be faced with an excruciating choice—accept the mark of the beast in order to

survive or face starvation and horrific persecution by the Antichrist and his followers. But those who come to Christ during this time, those whose names are found written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 13:8), will choose to endure, even to martyrdom.

"The True Mind"

by Bro. Jeff Short

"Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up." - Psalm 28:5

If what we "know" is actually not true, can we really be said to know? Jesus was asked which commandment in the law is greatest. He answered by gathering all God's commands into two. The first is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). The second is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39). The one greatest command in Scripture is to love God supremely in all, or with all our heart, soul, and mind. What does it mean to love God with all your mind? All the mind comprehends knowledge, will, and thought. To love God with our knowledge at least means we must have true knowledge of Him and think true thoughts about Him. We cannot rightly love God with all our mind while conceiving and keeping false thoughts about Him. Loving God with all our mind is not only about knowing true things about God, but it is never less than that.

God's one great command requires that we know Him truly. To harbor false conceptions of God is to worship a false god and commit blasphemous idolatry (Exodus 20:2-7). The Bible provides us with example and warning of false thoughts about God.

Beware of False, Failing Thoughts About God

- The fool thinks there is no God (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). He makes man the highest being and survival-of-the-fittest is his ethos. The fool thinks that whatever he has the power to do, he can do. There is no fearful looking for judgment with him, because there is no one to judge.

- The rich, worldly man doesn't think of God (James 4:13-17). God may be there, or He may not be there to the worldly minded. It doesn't matter to him, because he takes no account of God in his daily life.

- Pharaoh thinks God has no right or authority over him (Exodus 5:2). He judges the truth of God's claims and can receive or refuse at his own discretion. He is deluded into thinking he can mediate his own reality. He was postmodern before it was cool. The man-on-the-street way of saying it is, "That may be true or right for you, but it is not true for me."

- The wicked think that God is like them or like a man (Psalm 50:16-23). God may object to their thoughts and ways, but He can do nothing but thunder in the distance. If He objected to them, He should have spoken or forever hold His peace.

- Nebuchadnezzar thought that God was beside him (Daniel 4:29-37). He thought he could make his own way and maybe even that God owed him prosperity. He was an early prosperity preacher who made God a means to an end in order to get a little more comfort during his vaporous appearance on earth.

- False professors think God is their imaginary god (Matthew 7:21-23). They live their lives using God's name, but they have actually put God's name on the craft of their own minds and ultimately do not know Him at all.

True knowledge of God does not start in our minds, or proceed from our minds. God can only be known through revelation (Matthew 11:25-27; 16:16-17). God has revealed himself in His Word and we must have renewed minds in order to know Him (Colossians 3:10).

Historical Marker: "Who Persecutes Whom?"

by Bro. Curtis A. Pugh

That persecution exists is a sad fact both of history and of our own times. First of all let us establish what we mean by persecution. Broadly speaking, persecution may be said to be any action toward a person or group of persons that causes them pain and or fear. Persecution comes because of political, ethnic, cultural or religious reasons, although some of these causes may overlap. In some places it does also seem that women are persecuted simply because they are women. Our primary interest in this article is in persecution because of religion and especially that aimed against the Baptists. It is a fact of history that the Baptist forefathers, although called by different names, have been persecuted for almost two thousand years. It is also a fact of history that Baptists have never been the persecutors, though often persecuted themselves.

But the Baptists are not alone in experiencing persecution because of their devotion to God and to His truth. Many went before us. The Book of Job is thought by many to be the oldest Bible book, written before the time of Moses and long before the Lord established His church. In it Job speaks to his "friends" saying, "Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?" (Job 19:22). If we are correct about the era in which Job lived, this would be the oldest reference to persecution that we have in the Bible. The Psalmist cried out, "O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me" in Psalm 7:1. No doubt this has been and continues to be the heart-cry of God's children whenever persecuted. Our Lord Jesus instructed His followers how to react when persecuted. In Matthew 5:11, 12 He said, "*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*"

Merriam-Webster says that revile means to subject to verbal abuse. If we are following God's Book, we can expect to be reviled and to have all manner of evil falsely attributed to us. While enduring persecution may not bring happiness to us, we are instructed to be joyful in it. Jesus said this kind of persecution puts us in good company because "they" also persecuted the Old Testament prophets this way. Notice it is the "they" who do the persecuting. Stephen, in his powerful sermon before the Jewish leadership spoke of this persecution of God's prophets, saying: "*Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers*" (Acts 7:52). Notice the use of the word "they" once again here. Further instructions from our Lord included these words in Matthew 5:44: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Again the Lord Jesus said, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20). Notice again that it is the "they" who do the persecuting. True followers of the Lamb should expect nothing less than the same treatment that was heaped upon the reviled, lied against, persecuted and slain Lamb Himself. In 2 Timothy 3:12 Paul warned us with these words: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall

suffer persecution." Let us always remember, "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" (Matthew 20:25). Again a fourth time I call your attention to the "they" who persecute. The use of the word "they" puts them in a different category from those persecuted. "They" are an identifiable group. Many religious groups have been and continue to be persecuted, and while we deplore this, our concern in this article is with the true followers of the Lamb who are members of sound Baptist congregations. We dare not speak of all who claim the name Baptist or who have been called Baptists as true followers of the Lamb. Among those so named there have been both heretics and apostates just as there are today.

And so we come to our title and point of this article: Who Persecutes Whom? I have called your attention four times to the "they" who persecute. "They" are a different people from those persecuted. The people persecuted are the "Whom." The persecutors are the "Who." But who are "they?" Are they simply misguided Christians? By that I mean do the true children of God persecute other true children of God? Some would have us think so. Today many called Baptists are in love with the Reformers. Some of this sort even call themselves "Reformed Baptists." Some boast of their Calvinism and speak of John Calvin as if he were a great saint of God. Some denominated Baptist admire certain Roman Catholics such as Augustine. Others among the Baptists claim affinity with the Puritans. This writer knows a Baptist preacher who established a Bible college and was so enamored with John Wesley that he named his school after that Anglican minister – for the Wesley brothers lived and died in the Church of England. Not only were these churches involved in the active persecution of Baptists, all these preached a false gospel of water-salvation. They "baptized" babies and taught (and still teach) that their sprinkling of a little water on an unbelieving child saves that child and makes it a member of their church. We live in a time when truth is mixed with error and both Protestant and Catholic ideas are mixed with the Baptists. Where shall we go for an answer to the question "Who Persecutes Whom?" Where can we learn just who the "they" are? We shall not appeal to history, biographies or human reason. Rather, we have learned to flee to God's Book for answers to perplexing questions. It is in that Holy Volume God has told us all we need to know about salvation and godly living. And what do we find on this subject? Must we delve into deep theological reasoning? No! The Lord Jesus Himself gave us the answer to this question in plain and clear words. He told us "Who" does the persecuting. He told us who the "they" are in "*If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you...*" Here are the words of our Lord: "*Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me*" (John 15:20, 21). There is a clear distinction between persecutors and those persecuted. There is a clear distinction between revilers and those reviled. There is a clear distinction between those who falsely accuse and those falsely accused. Jesus said in our last quoted text, "...all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." You may admire the intellects and writing skills of great Protestants, Puritans and Catholics, but if they, like Calvin and others among them are or were persecutors of the followers of the Lamb, "they know not him that sent me." This preacher did not say that: Christ Himself said that! If you wish, you may identify yourself with the Reformers, but among their leadership were persecutors of our Baptist forefathers. If our Baptist forefathers loved the truth, their persecutors did not even though they may have given mental assent to some truth. Intellectually they may have been doctrinally correct. An old preacher once said, "A false prophet can be gun-barrel-straight and just as empty." What a trick of the devil! Is it possible that the devil would be behind men who were/are gun-barrel-straight on sovereign

grace but who teach a false way of salvation – baptismal regeneration? An intellectual apprehension of truth does not necessarily in itself guarantee regeneration. We must not doubt or deny the words of our Lord: those who persecute the Lord’s people do not know the Father!

Years ago I came across these words. I admired them greatly as a concise history of the treatment of dissenters at the hands of both the Harlot and her Harlot-daughters. So greatly did I admire them that I wrote them on a flyleaf of my Bible. Briefly they tell the truth about persecutors.

Consider the import of these words, please: “With the Catholics it was the Mass or the musket: The full sacraments of the church or torture, gibbets and flames – Conformity or death. With the Church of England it was the prayer book or the prison: The whole service of her Rubric or the severest penalties of her laws – Submission or Smithfield. With the Puritans it was the meeting-house-worship or the custody of the jailer: Parish rates or stakes, stripes and confiscations – The seal of the covenant or the statute of exile.” (History of the Puritans, Dr. Colts). (Smithfield in the above quotation refers to the place now in central London where Baptists and others were burned at the stake.) This is an excellent and very concise summary of the persecutions inflicted by Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans wherever they have been in power. And shall we call the men brethren who were part and party to such persecution? Dare we think that our Baptist forefathers who suffered at the hands of the men who led these groups called them brethren? Do you think they thought of them as simply misguided fellow followers of the Lamb? And shall we, their children, identify ourselves with their persecutors? They may have held to some truth, but if they subjected others to persecution in its various forms, we have no Bible authority to think of them as genuine Christians. Those who persecute do not follow the Lamb! Those who persecuted Christ’s followers were then unregenerate and unconverted regardless of their doctrinal soundness in certain areas of theology. Sadly, there does not seem to be historical evidence that these men ever experienced godly sorrow, repentance and evangelical faith after their despicable persecution of God’s children.

“Who Persecutes Whom?” Paul persecuted the true children of God, but did so before he was converted. His testimony in this matter is found in 1 Timothy 1:13 in these words: “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” In this testimony we find further support for the principle that those who persecute do so because they do not know the Father. Again, the Holy Spirit through Paul teaches us just who the “they” is: “they” are the ones that do the persecuting and they are unregenerate. In Galatians 4:29 Paul wrote: “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.” Who are the “they” who persecute? They are in the same crowd as Ishmael who “was born after the flesh.” You may call persecutors your brothers in Christ if you wish, but you do so at your own peril for the Bible clearly teaches otherwise. Finally, consider the words of Paul in closing: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” (Ephesians 5:11).

"Biblical Standards Of Separation"

by Bro. David M. Green

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” (James 4:1-4)

I have struggled for many days on finding a text. Not because of the lack of teaching in the Word of God, but because the Bible has much to say about separation. The more this subject came to mind, and the more I

talked to brethren across the country on both sides of the issue, the more I felt led to use this verse as my text. In this passage, the Bible clearly tells us that being a friend of the world is being the enemy of God.

What has happened in our churches? Independent, Sovereign Grace, Landmark, Missionary Baptists have become so worldly that many church-goers leave the church singing “Just As I Am” to go home to be just as they were! In years gone by, many of the older brethren stood against worldliness. Preaching against sin was a common thing! Yet, today’s pulpits have grown silent on sin. The modern-day preacher has abandoned such sermons in order to gain popularity with the people. Far too many preachers are afraid to lose a friend or a dollar bill that they leave out areas that might offend someone. Yet, what does the Word of God say about these things?

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (II Corinthians 6:14-18)

Christian separation is almost unheard of today. It is sad, but there are church members in the world today that have gone to church faithfully to hear their pastor preach on many different passages and subjects but never on being separate. This passage teaches separation in a great big way. We are supposed to not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Many apply this to marriage. That’s true, but we also should apply it to dating, friendships, business relationships, etc.

The Apostle Paul wrote this passage under inspiration of God, and he makes it clear that a believer in Christ and a non-believer are as different as day and night. Does the Devil and Christ have a relationship? NO! Does light and darkness have anything in common? NO! Does the temple of God have any place for an idol? Certainly not! So then, we must be separate (saith the Lord). This was wasn’t Paul’s message. He did not invent it. It isn’t a legalistic hair splitting attitude, this is the Word of God, plain and simple!

“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica...” (II Timothy 4:10)

Loving the world and not living a life of separation is dangerous to the Lord’s work! This man could have been a great help to the ministry of Paul. Yet, because of his love for the world, he forsook Paul. Some brethren in our day might accuse Brother Paul of running him off. Yet, he did not run him off...Demas forsook Paul because he loved the world. *“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3)*

A very interesting question is found here. For a friendship to happen, two people need to have some kind of an agreement. There has to be at least one thing that the people have in common. In every relationship that I have ever seen between a Christian and a worldly person, it is the

Christian that lowers his (or her) standard in order to make the friendship work. And, in order to keep that friendship, that child of God will go without ever taking any kind of a stand against sin because it might scare someone off.

“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.” (Luke 18:11)

The problem in churches today is that people will try to justify themselves by comparing themselves to others. Friends, we need to stop setting our standards with men, and set God as our standard! The question isn't whether or not someone else is “worse” than we are...the question is are we living the way God has commanded us to live?

“For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” (Leviticus 11:44)

God is our standard. He demands holiness. Obviously, we will never be as holy as God, but that does not mean we should stop trying. Because He is changeless, this verse is also repeated in the New Testament in I Peter 1.

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15)

This world has a culture that is not our own. They live differently than a child of God should live. Their way of dress (or lack thereof) is different, their language is vile, etc is all very different. We can go into the world and preach the gospel to them but we do not join in with them. We remain separate from them!

“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” (John 17:14-19)

Notice the Lord as He prayed this prayer, said that we are not of the world, even as He is not of the world. He was here, and he dwelt among men but He kept Himself from sin. He remained holy. That word sanctify means to make holy. The Word of God is what separates us from the world!

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

The fact is, by separating ourselves from the world, we are being a testimony to the world. Light is different than darkness. The two have no fellowship one with another. Light is brighter than darkness. You can see

it from far away. By letting our light shine...by being different from the world...by living these Biblical standards of separation, we are in fact being a testimony to the world.

“Divisive Doctrine?”

by Bro. Donnie Burford

Some Christians view the word “doctrine” as almost a curse word. The thought process is essentially “doctrine is to be avoided because doctrine causes division among Christians, and God desires Christians to be united as it says in John 17:21, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, [art] in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” Of course they take this passage out of its proper context to think or hope such a thing. Yet, While it is true that doctrine does cause division at times, if the division is due to a disagreement over an important biblical teaching, which is what the word ‘Doctrine’ literally means; A Teaching, then division is not necessarily a bad thing. Paul declares in 2 Timothy 4:3, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;” Titus 1:9,2:1 proclaims, “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:” Sound, Steadfast, True, Biblical teaching is in fact Scriptural Doctrine, that which the Bible reveals and is to be taught! The Christian faith, more than any other, is based on doctrine. The doctrines of the Deity of Christ (John 1:1, 14), the Substitutionary sacrifice of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21), the Resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:17), and Salvation by Grace through Faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9) are absolutely essential and non-negotiable. If any of these doctrines are removed, altered, or denied, then the faith we are to hold to becomes empty, void and even worse, deceiving if not damning! There are many other doctrines in the Christian faith that are very important, such as the Trinity, the Inspiration of Scripture, and the reality of the Eternal State. If Christian doctrine is causing division on any of these points, so be it, as those who deny these doctrines need to be separated from or by the Grace of God, If they will allow it, taught the True Doctrines of the Word of God.

However, there has also been a tremendous amount of division due to doctrines that do not, or at least should not, have “Decisive” status. Examples include the timing of the rapture, , premillennialism vs. amillennialism, Head Covering, Unleavened Wine or Grape Juice etc., etc. These doctrines are important, as Every Christian doctrine carries some importance. They are especially important in regards to the Unity of a church in which one finds their membership, (see more next paragraph.) But these doctrines are perhaps not ones worth dividing or separating over with our other brethren or Sister churches of different persuasions on these matters. There are dedicated, Christ-loving believers on both sides of these issues and this does not make them Non Christian nor Non Churches, even if they may be wrong. We should not divide or separate over non-essential issues, at least not to the extent that we question the validity of another personal faith, Character, Love for Christ, His church and the Truth. It may serve us all well to remember, but particularly for those who have it all perfectly worked out in their own Theological reasoning’s, 1Corinthians 8:2: “And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.” Funny, in a strange kind of way, how some will boldly if not brashly declare their Doctrinal soundness as they Judge and condemn others, even while many times in their application it is seen that they in fact are denying the more weighty matters of Doctrine. Pride, no matter how it may camouflage itself is blinding! The Truth is None have perfect insight into all things, and thus God in his Word often has taken special steps to specifically declare and point out the Weighty matters for us.

1Corinthians 13:12-13; ‘For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these [is] charity.’ How long will these differences continue among even those who are whole heartily seeking the Truth and desiring to Glorify God in their lives and churches? It is believed these differences will persist unto the Lord Himself takes us into His presences for all eternity and changes us into His likeness! 1John 3:2-3; “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” There are degrees of division, however, that are appropriate even in regards to Less Weightier Christian doctrine. A church is to be united and like-minded in regards to focus, priorities, Ministry and in the Truth as it is believed and practiced. If there is a doctrinal issue that prevents a united focus and spirit, it may better for a person to find a different church rather than cause conflict and division within a church. There may be differences of opinion in a church even in the beliefs of its members. In fact there is no doubt that there is and will be. And although one or the other may or may not be right, you can be sure, for either to cause a Schism it is wrong, even sin! The purposed goal is clearly declared on this matter. In context spoken to a Local church, which in Truth is the only kind of church there is, 1Corinthians 1:10: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and [that] there be no divisions (Schism) among you; but [that] ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” 1Corinthians 12:25: “That there should be no schism in the body; but [that] the members should have the same care one for another.” And yet just as true is the often present reality, 1Corinthians 11:18; “For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions (Schism) among you; and I partly believe it.”

This sort of divisions has been the cause of much hurt, confusion and suffering within the Christian faith and especially in the Lords churches. Some joke, although it is no joking matter, that church splits are the easiest way to plant a new church. But if division due to lesser doctrine is necessary to prevent disunity and conflict, then division is what needs to occur. If everyone would throw aside preconceptions, presuppositions, biases, preferred traditional interpretations and just accept the revealed doctrines the Bible teaches, division would not be a problem. But we are all fallen and sin-infected beings, (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23), and often our Sin prevents us from perfectly understanding and applying God’s Word in every instance. Not understanding and submitting to Biblical doctrine is what causes division, not doctrine itself. We absolutely should divide over disagreements regarding the core doctrines of the Christian faith. And sometimes, division over non-essential matters is necessary as well, although to a far lesser degree than many have wrongly taken it. But, the blame for division should never be placed on Bible doctrine for in reality, it is the only means to true, fuller biblical unity in our churches and among our Brothers and Sisters in Christ! No, Bible Doctrine in and of itself is not Divisive, but rather it is Divinely purposed to unify our hearts and minds more fully to God and one another! If there is any real divisive purpose to Doctrine, it would seem it is primarily to separate the Sheep from the Goats, 1John 2:19; ‘They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would [no doubt] have continued with us: but [they went out], that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.’ It is believed, What truly causes divisions most often in our churches and amongst our Brethren is that we have forgotten we still have a finite, fallible and often piously prideful sin nature, that when left un-repentant of, leads to all kinds of misunderstanding and improper application of other Biblical Doctrines, such as, Soul Liberty, Priesthood of the Believer and the Autonomy of the Local Church. No, not all disagreements even over Doctrine, necessitates Separation or the breaking of Corporate or

personal fellowship and cooperation. There are enough real reasons today for that without us making up our own reasons based on wrongly applied and often ignored other true doctrines to do so! You can be sure you will never have to avoid or contradict any True Biblical Doctrine to uphold your position on another Doctrine. God’s Word never Contradicts itself in its teachings, so neither should we be found doing so in our beliefs or applications.

“The Seriousness Of the Gospel” by Bro. Todd Bryant

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” – Galatians 1:6-9 Just a few decades after the ministry of Jesus, the churches in Galatia had a major problem. They had corrupted the Gospel. In fact, Paul even says that what they had turned to was “not another” Gospel because there is no other. But, what had they done? Simply, they had reverted to a belief system which sought to mix the Mosaic Law with grace. This must not be done. Grace is free. Works for salvation is the opposite of free.

The seriousness of the preservation of free grace is quickly seen in this passage. Those who preach a works-based “gospel” are to “be accursed”. And, if your mind happened to have been wandering, perhaps you caught it then second time. Rarely are things repeated with such emphasis in the Bible. This in and of itself speaks to the need of keeping the Gospel of Christ pure. Simply, we are bought at a price (1 Corinthians 7:23). That high price was the life of the only begotten Son of God for our sins. The resurrection 3 days later proved God’s acceptance of Jesus’ finished work.

There seems to be a mellowing in our day concerning the acceptance of anything deemed “Christian”. One of the most popular “preachers” in America has regularly admitted that he doesn’t preach on sin because that’s a negative message. This same one admitted on a national talk show that he believed people who reject Jesus as the Messiah in other faiths may still be saved.

How can such things be accepted among Bible believing Christians? Jesus plainly said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14:6). And again, *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:14-16). And once more, *“But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you”* (John 10:26). We must believe Jesus’ words over any others no matter how popular they may be.

Child of God, we are living in the last days. If the Gospel could be perverted just a few years following the ministry of our Savior, how much more can it be perverted today. We must guard the Gospel with all that we have lest we become a group that is just interested in ear tickling (2 Timothy 4:3).

Danger of False Teachers:

"The Old Paths"

by Bro. Stephen McCool Sr.



Jeremiah 6:16 *"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein."*

As God warned the nation of Judah in Jeremiah's day so should we take heed to the same warning in our day. Chapter 5 verses 30 and 31 of Jeremiah *"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"* In our nation today most of the preachers and the teachers "prophesy falsely". They "rule by their means" and yes the people who claim to be God's people "love to have it so". America's churches for the most part have put away the "old paths" and have gone the way of the false prophets. There was a time in America when the majority of Baptist and Protestant churches taught the Doctrines of Grace. This was before Humanism crept in from the Catholic nations of Europe during the early 1800s. Humanism is now the official religion of the western world. Humanism teaches the morals and values of humans. From the day we are born till the day we die we are taught how good humans are and are told of the accomplishments humans have made without any help from a higher being. This is even being taught in our churches. Any teaching that puts humans before God is not a teaching of God.

Most pastors and teachers today are teaching human philosophy. They teach self help classes and sell books and videos on the same topic. They are teaching a false hope and a false salvation. Christian motivational speakers are making millions of dollars off those who are seeking after answers in their life. "The old paths" are not good enough for them. You can here them say: "The old ways don't work in today's world."

I heard a minister on the radio say that sports have such an impact on our lives today that the churches must participate in sports to draw in people. Churches are building gyms and ball fields to draw in those who are consumed with sports. Instead of concentrating on teaching God's word and feeding the flock ministers are catering to the fleshly wants of the people. "And the people love to have it so".

The mega-church movement has brought about a new form of greed in our nation. Most pastors are striving to make their church a mega-church. The more people they draw in the more money for the pastor, his staff, and their pet projects. Here in our part of the country they start by replacing their old church building with a multimillion dollar building then comes the multifunction gym and ball fields or in some cases a rodeo arena.

I know of churches that have "fantasy" sports leagues, which is nothing more than legalized gambling. I have known men that if their church did not have a winning softball team they would start looking for a church that did and would move their families membership so they could play on a winning team. I have seen faithful church members stop going to church because of disagreements over sports with another member. All this for the sake of keeping the people happy and keeping attendance numbers high. Did not God tell Jeremiah of His remnant? Several times in scripture God mentions His remnant in Israel and in the last days. Nowhere in the scripture does God tell of His people being the majority

while here in this life. As long as we walk in the good way of the old paths we will continue to be the minority or remnant.

Jeremiah 6:16 *"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein."*

"Natural Religion"

by Bro. Curtis A. Pugh



Let us consider the natural religion of humankind. We shall consider its existence, its nature, its origin, the influence of it upon modern Christendom and the Baptists, and the damnation it brings. Even the casual observer will notice that all the peoples spread over this vast globe upon which we find ourselves have one thing in common. Human beings, perhaps for several reasons, have a tendency toward religion. Their religious beliefs, rituals, and practices differ from place to place. This is to be expected as a result of isolation in the past and perhaps other factors. But all these different religions share a common basis and common ideas. Because of this we can consider them together in such an article as this. We admit there are many differences among the different religious practices of mankind, but we insist, and hope to demonstrate, that they all have, as stated, a common basis or origin and fundamental common ideas.

We are not attacking the right of people to believe what they believe. As historic Baptists we insist on what some old writers have called "soul liberty." This is the right of every individual to practice the religion of his or her choice, free from coercion from other individuals, religious organization, or governments as long as these practices do not harm others or infringe upon the liberties of others in any way. Historic Christianity has always claimed to be a revealed religion. It has claimed to be exclusively the religion revealed by God Himself. Our great concern is this: modern Christendom has been permeated and therefore greatly affected by the basic concepts of this natural religion. This pollution of Christianity by natural religion has changed the Gospel from that originally preached and taught by the apostles into something quite opposite. Having observed the existence of natural religion – religion that exists apart from the written Word of God, the Bible, let us consider the essential nature of it. We are not concerned with the differences that exist between varying groups of peoples and their religious beliefs and practices, but with that cord that runs throughout and binds all natural religions together.

Many people the world over think to please Allah by making pilgrimages and mutilating their bodies as some faithful Moslems do. (I am careful to use their name, Allah, because the god of the Moslems is not the God of the Bible for many reasons, but that is another subject and one we cannot consider in this short piece. In spite of this, liberal media in the U.S. and around the world have used the word "God" in speaking of "Allah" and had great success in convincing the masses that these are one and the same person.) Some American Indians, like the Navajo, may kill a sheep and drain the animal's blood into the ground as a kind of sacrifice, seeking to please their deity. Others may, in the words of a Tlingit Indian in the North of Canada, "seek to placate God" by leaving food out in the forest or by sacrificing tobacco upon a fire or upon a lake or river. Among the Iroquois of certain northern States and Canada, a white dog is sacrificed by burning once each year for the sins of the people. Others,

like the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) insist that in certain cases God can only be placated by the shedding of the blood of the guilty party. Hence, in the Mormon founded state of Utah one option left to condemned persons is the firing squad. In this way those condemned Mormons who think to redeem themselves by placating God with the shedding of their own blood have the opportunity to do so.

Many other religious ideas and practices could be named but the aforementioned ones are enough to show that the common thread among all of them is the notion that a man or woman, by doing something, by making some kind of sacrifice, can appease or placate an angry god. This idea is based upon the knowledge or feeling that there is a higher power or god of some kind and also that there exists in their own hearts and lives such a thing as sin and that they are guilty of incurring the displeasure of their god by their behavior. How can we account for such convictions among all the varied people of the world? I believe that God has given humankind three lights. The first light is the light of nature. As thoughtful and candid men observe the natural world around them it is evident that behind the existence of such intricate systems in plants, animals and the universe, there must have been an intelligent being. That this being was both wise and powerful in order to bring about such order cannot be doubted by the unprejudiced mind that looks at creation. The second light is the light of conscience. Conscience is that capacity in man to sense right and wrong. It is the awareness of the existence of good and evil in the world and in the personal life of ones own self. Because conscience can be seared as with a hot iron and thus desensitized it may not be relied upon as inerrant. However, there is a third and greatest light, the Word of God in written form. Revealed from God, it tells us about God, about our condition as sinners and about the way of salvation. This third light is infallible, inerrant, verbally inspired, preserved and designed by God to make known to us all that we need to know to be saved and to live a life pleasing to God.

Natural religion, then, is the religion of an incomplete revelation. It is based upon the inferior lights of nature and of conscience. And, as we have pointed out, the commonality among all forms of natural religion is this idea: man can and must do something to appease or placate God. And so we have set forth the origin of this natural religion. It is based upon nature or the observance of God's creation. God's creation reveals only a little about the character and person of God other than to set forth His wisdom and power. And it is based upon conscience, which while bringing about an awareness of sin and offense to the Creator, is unreliable and tells mankind nothing about the plan of God to save His people from their sins. In summary we may say that natural religion is the religion of the natural man apart from any idea of God's provision for guilty sinners. It admits the existence of a deity or deities. It admits the fact that man has by evil doing offended and is therefore guilty and subject to vengeance and punishment, but is lacking of any clear teaching of salvation by free grace.

As historic Christians (Baptists) we are rightly concerned about the inroads made by natural religion among Christendom. We submit that all the groups and denominations of Christendom have embraced or at the very least been influenced by the basic tenets of natural religion. Even among the Baptists are many to be found whose religion is in reality a form of this natural religion, although of course the claim is made that their religion is "old time" and "biblical." Since the writer is a Baptist "from the tip of his toes to the top of his head," let us confine the rest of our remarks to the Baptists. What we shall say about them is readily applicable to the various denominations and sects among what we choose to call Christendom. We use this term because we are not ready to admit that such polluted religious beliefs and practices – such "Christianized natural religion" can rightly be called Christianity in any historical and biblical sense. We dare say this because natural religion, whether

"Christianized" or not, is based upon a fundamental concept that is contrary to the Word of God.

What is this fundamental concept that is contrary to the Word of God? It is, simply stated, this: natural religion of all sorts (Christianized included) insists that man can appease or placate God by doing something. Essentially then, all forms of natural religion are based upon the idea that salvation or forgiveness from God is based upon works. Various forms of natural religion insist upon differing ideas as to just what must be done to please God, but all insist that the way to enter into God's "good graces" is by doing something pleasing to him. Among the Baptists it has become accepted doctrine by the majority that "going forward" and "praying the sinner's prayer" or "making a decision for Christ" or some other such thing is the act whereby one initiates toward himself God's pleasure and thus his acceptance by God – in short, his salvation.

Our appeal is not to human reason for that is the source of natural religious ideas among the Baptists. Our appeal is to the Word of God. What saith the Scripture? Let us first look at Romans 8:7-9. There we read: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Emphasis added.) The Holy Spirit, writing through our Brother Paul makes it clear that there are two kinds of people. Those two kinds of people are "they that are in the flesh" and they that are "in the Spirit." (Incidentally, here also perishes the idea that being "in the Spirit" has reference to some kind of hyperemotional state as is believed by some called Pentecostals and Charismatics.) Paul writes that every true child of God, having been regenerated by and indwelt by the Holy Spirit is "in the Spirit" and "not in the flesh." But the concept we want to point out in this very practical passage is this: "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Simply stated, there is nothing that an unsaved person can do to please God. There is nothing that an unsaved person can do to appease or placate God.

This means, then, that when an unsaved person "goes forward" at the end of a religious service in a Baptist Church (I said I would stick with the Baptists!) that person is not doing something that is pleasing to God. When an unsaved person makes a "decision for Christ" or "prays the sinner's prayer" neither of those acts is pleasing to God. That idea may be shocking to some readers, but it is the plain teaching of the Word of God! (Incidentally, where in the Bible did you ever read of any apostle or other New Testament preacher inviting people to "walk the aisle" or "make a decision for Christ" or "pray the sinner's prayer?") I do not mean to say that it is wrong to pray. Born again (regenerated) children of God do pray! They are continually calling upon the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:13, I Cor. 1:2). I am saying that unregenerate people act according to their hearts and that their hearts are wicked and unknowable. Therefore that which issues forth from their hearts is evil. Want proof? The following Scriptures need little comment. They prove that the heart of the natural (unregenerate) human is evil and evil things spring from it. "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" (Jer. 17:9). "*O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*" (Matt. 12:34). "*But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies*" (Matt. 15:18-19).

Natural religion, its ideas and practices come from the unregenerate heart of natural men and women – from the heart of those "that are in the flesh." These folk look at creation and sense that some things are right and wrong from their consciences and develop their religious ideas from these two lights. Someone says, "But what about those ideas that natural

men and women get from the Bible?" "Don't those Baptists whom you say are polluted with natural religion use the Bible too?" Again we hurry to the Bible for our answer where we seek to let God's Word say what It says! Speaking of knowing (understanding in a spiritually profitable way) the revealed Word of God, we read: *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (I Cor. 2:14). Two reasons are given that the natural (unregenerate) man does not "receive" (believe in a spiritually profitable way) the Bible. First of all, he thinks the things taught in the Word of God are foolishness. They are foreign to his natural ideas for he has ingrained in his thinking the idea that he can do something and "get in good" with God. Some Baptists do this! They omit the reading and study of certain portions of the Bible, especially of the New Testament because these portions don't "fit" with their preconceived ("natural") ideas. The idea that unsaved humans cannot do anything to please God is totally foreign to their "natural" religious ideas and so they think the Scriptures that teach against this idea are foolish. There must be another plausible interpretation – one that fits in with their "natural" ideas. But these 3 verses quoted above go much further. They say that "natural" (unregenerate) men are unable to know (in a spiritually profitable way) the things revealed in the Bible because they are "spiritually discerned." The unregenerate man – the "natural" man does not have the Spirit of God. Because of this he cannot – he does not have the ability – to profitably know what the Bible teaches.

And so many – dare I write "most" – Baptists insist that lost men and women must "pray the sinner's prayer," etc., so that God will look favorably down upon them and regenerate them. They twist the idea of the new birth (regeneration) and make it the result of an act of the will of a human being. This in spite of the clear teaching of the Bible which says in John 1:13: *"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* Read the context! The preceding verse (John 1:12) speaks of those who during Jesus' earthly ministry welcomed ("received") Him. Verse 13, the verse last quoted tells us why some people received Christ. It was because they were "born," i.e. born again. And it clearly says they were born "of God" – not of any kind of action of any thing that might be called "the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man." That is clear enough if you will have it!

But if the Bible does not command that people "pray the sinner's prayer," etc., what does it command? First of all God commands *"...all men every where to repent"* (Acts 17:30). This is an obligation upon all men! And at the same time, the Bible says that God grants or gives or works repentance in individuals (Acts 11:18). Unlike natural religion, the religion of the Bible is one of free and sovereignly bestowed grace. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Eph. 2:8, 9). In spite of this passage and others like it, the influence of natural religion among many Baptists causes them to deny that faith is a gift. It causes them to insist that repentance and faith are not works, but at the same time they are things that must be done by lost people in order for them to qualify for God's grace. If that is not salvation by works, I don't understand the English language! Do not let the double talk fool you!

In conclusion it may be said that "natural religion" has made great inroads among the Baptists of our day. Long years ago it was not the case, but top-water studying and top-water preaching never plumb the depths of truth. As one country preacher said it, "Preacherettes preach sermon-ettes and produce Christian-ettes." Oh reader! Hear the wise words of the Proverbs (16:25), *"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."* Natural religion, I would hasten to add, brings damnation and eternal death. God is not pleased with that religion that attempts to please Him and yet ignores and despises His Son, God's gift, whose one sacrifice of Himself was enough. The Bible says of Christ, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice

for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Christ's one sacrifice of Himself pleased God. God does not need to be placated because He has already been placated by the death of His Son, Jesus Christ on behalf of lost sinners.

Cast away your natural religion and all its ideas! Look to the lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who was the acceptable sacrifice. He was and still is, in the words of John the Baptist, "the Lamb of God" (John 1:36). You cannot placate God because you, as a lost sinner cannot please God. But you do not need to placate God – you do not need to appease Him! The Lord Jesus Christ died to placate God and God accepted His bloody death and proved it in that He resurrected Him and seated Him at His own right hand. What do you think to add to that with your natural religion?

"Missionary Sparrows"

by Bro. Jeff Short

"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" - Matthew 6:26

Why did Jesus point His disciples to the sparrows for comfort in the face of persecution?

Matthew chapter 10 recounts how Jesus instructed, warned, and comforted His disciples before sending them out on a disciple-making mission. He did not hide or soften the reality. He told them plainly what things they could expect on mission.

He told them to be careful with rulers and those in power. They were to expect trouble with the worldly authorities, including persecution and imprisonment. He warned them about the treachery and disloyalty they would encounter, even among family members. He prepared them to expect to be hated by those whom they tried to reach. They were to expect persecution and even being run out of town. He warned them about the slander they would face. He also told them that some would be killed for the testimony of Christ and His Gospel.

Jesus was always very open about the costs for following Him. It caused many to rethink and depart. This is quite a contrast from the message from so many corners today: "God loves you just the way you are and has a wonderful plan for your life, if you will only just accept Him." That was not Jesus' message. It is not the message of the Bible, and it should not be our message today. But I digress. Now to the sparrows.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." - Matthew 10:29-31

In the midst of these plain and terrifying warnings, Jesus directed the disciples to consider the sparrows. In fact, He did this immediately after raising the prospect of martyrdom. Why? How were the sparrows to help and comfort them in the face of such persecutions? I believe there are two primary reasons.

God's Fatherhood

Jesus pointed out the sparrows relatively little worth: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" He also pointed out the care "your Father" has for them. This is an argument from the lesser to the greater as Jesus

concluded, "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

The lesson is plain. We go on mission in Jesus' name and we have the care of our heavenly Father. He cares intimately about the insignificant creatures of creation. He is our Father and we are more valuable to Him than many such creatures. We should not then presume we have lost His care because we come into persecution for His name.

This is both comforting and encouraging. But Jesus had another reason for pointing His disciples to the sparrows.

God's Sovereignty

Jesus said, "And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." Some would understand this to say that not a sparrow dies without the notice and care of God. That doesn't quite capture the full picture.

The Bible is clear that God is sovereign over His creation. He ordains life and death. He appoints the times, seasons, and bounds of habitation. This is true of the sparrow and the worm and the king on his throne. The Psalmist paints the manifest wisdom of God's sovereignty over His creation this way:

"These wait all upon thee;

That thou mayest give them their meat in due season.

That thou givest them they gather:

Thou openest thine hand,

They are filled with good.

Thou hidest thy face,

They are troubled:

Thou takest away their breath,

They die,

And return to their dust."

Psalm 104:27-29

What is the lesson? When a sparrow falls to the ground, it is ordained of God. Likewise, when we come into persecution, it is ordained of God. He has permitted it and He has purpose in it. Even Jesus said as much to Pilate when facing His own death, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." (John 19:11)

Take comfort and find courage in the mission of the Gospel in the world. Nothing will befall us that is beyond God's control. Whatever may come will be for our good and ultimately for God's glory.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." - Romans 8:28

"Self Seeking and Salvation"

by Bro. Todd Bryant

"But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there" - James 3:14-16

One needs only turn on the evening newscast to find proof that this text is true. Whether we'd like to admit it or not, America has created a self-seeking, self-glorifying, self-gratifying society. Humanism is the underlying problem in our country (and our world too, of course) and it has bred all kinds of evil. The promotion of self in spite of any repercussions for others will produce headlines in the newspaper (or Yahoo! as it is today) like we are currently seeing.

This attitude pervades modern thinking and it has even spread into modern day Christendom. "Become a Christian and God will add to you 'health and wealth'". The list obviously differs from pulpit to pulpit. But the message is the same - Christianity is the means to self-gratification in every conceivable realm of life. And yet, the entire New Testament denies such a belief. Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). God given faith is not focused on the betterment of self but on the exaltation of Jesus Christ and the spread of the glorious Gospel which points to Calvary.

The modern attitude of using God for self-gain is foreign to the Scriptures. Jesus never gained the "Best Life Now" that is promoted today. None of the apostles ever found such a life. Jesus' very instruction to the rich young ruler to sell all that he had and donate it to the poor certainly flies in the faith of such a movement (Luke 18:22). The church at Jerusalem became so poor that other churches actually collected money to help them financially (1 Corinthians 16:1-4). The list goes on and on.

True Christianity simply isn't about self - it's about denying self! Firstly, we are to seek to glorify God in all that we do (1 Corinthians 10:31). This doesn't mean using God for personal gain. This means using whatever gain He has provided us, according to His will and purpose, to glorify Him! Deny self!!

Secondly, we are to live for others. Jesus was the perfect Example of this. He left Heaven's glory to live a life as a man (albeit a sinless man) to ultimately bear the penalty of our sins. Yet, we are commanded to love one another in the same way. We are even commanded to put others ahead of ourselves. Philippians 2:3 seems plain enough - "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself".

Child of God, the Lord did not open your heart to the Gospel so that He is now your servant. On the contrary, He opened your heart to the Gospel so that you would serve Him. He remains God and you remain a creature. He also saved you in order that you would share the love of Christ with others. Seek today to deny "self-seeking in your hearts" and serve God and man as He gives you ability.

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